Interview with Mrs. Selma Culbertson

conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson and Miss Kathyn Bumeister

3/25/76

Dodson: I wondering, Mrs. Culbertson, if you would tell us for the tape your full name and when you came to San Fernando.

Culbertson: I, Selma Leanor Culbertson came to the San Fernando Valley in 1915. This will be 61 years on the 5th of July. I lived down toward the Mission. It was quite dilapidated at the time. I think I have a picture that I'll show you. And I just loved it -- I'm not Catholic -- and I don't know what there was about it. I just loved the old Mission. And we used to walk through it. They had cactus all through it. Beautiful. I had one little girl, maybe she was five weeks old and we ..... were down there. Now the Pico House was on, um, Columbia St across Brand from Mission. You see the.....House is on .....and.....St. right across from the new Catholic Church . Which was not there at the time but is now and then the post office is this side and..... me and Roland Wilson, he was the son of one of the ..... girls who married him, Mr. Wilson. He was our post master for years and years and years but he has also passed away now. But there were no sidewalks at all, just narrow dirt streets and even.....wasn't paved and didn't go clear through to San Fernando Road and there no other way for people to drive to get to San fernando Road. So they went through our (?) branch (?) and we gave them certain permission, you know, so it was used. But now they have a wonderful.....as you probably know. But if you look to the left of the..... you see an old road that went into our ranch. It was just a little narrow road, you know, you couldn't pass but it was used all the time. This was a citrus country, all citrus. Granada Hills, which is called Granada Hills used to be called a Sunshine Ranch, because it was all citrus and when the sun came out in the morning it was the most beautiful sight you ever saw in your life. That's why they called it the Sunshine Ranch.

Bumeister: You mean it was officially called that and its Granada Hills.

Culbertson: Yes, uh-huh, yes that was the name of it, The Sunshine Ranch. And then...has happened throughout the years. Somebody else wanted to get in on it and so one or two started buying portions of the ranch and started building their homes and now it's a great big city. And then also this whole area, Granada Hills, Mission Hills and Sylmar and what used to be called citrus park, afterwards and..... was .....San Fernando all of it, and when they....they decided they wanted to go off to

themselves and organize their own place. You can't blame them, oh no, I didn't blame them. It is really then in the ?(old)? Mission Hills that we lived you see, that is now Mission Hills where we moved to San Fernando, thsi ranch about...miles out and was the other aquaduct I told you about. It was called the Cascade Ranch because it crossed the san Fernando Road the cascades come down form the north. The water.....we needed water very, very badly for the groves, massive groves, it was just beautiful, particularly so to me because I was raised in Chicago, you know, where you didn't have a mountain or an orange tree, you didn't have anything like that but I did have....fun. And when I first came ot it was 1909 with my brother and a few months later my mother came out. That was my first orange tree and I just stood there and looked and looked at it and then I went to work. I was seventeen at the time. I was a ....typist, that was my first job and hostess and I got a job in Los Angeles and I used to ?(enjoy)? riding on those darling red cars, you know, and I had two blocks to walk right past orange grove and oh boy I'd just walked so slowly, take plenty of time to walk slowly because oh that was just wonderful to me. My father used to be, um, well, not a real artist but a hand artist, you know, most all of his pictures were of mountains, you see, you never see anything like that in the east and I got a hankering to see a mountain and boy oh boy I saw them. I was all over them, I used to be a great hiker, you wouldn't think so but I was.

Dodson: You were seventeen then when you came out for the first time?

Culbertson:When I came out in 1909, then we moved to San gabriel which also is, it had a mission . That was the first mission I saw. We were just a short ways from the mission and then that;s where I could go to the little old red cars and go into the city. Then I worked for an architect and he wanted me to learn work, because I was so interested in it and had a good steady hand. And my mother took a notion she had to go to Ca. So, I did too. I wanted to see those mountains and orange trees. So we came out here. Then in 1912 we lived in San Bernadino for about three years before that, it was such a small town you wouldn't believe it if you see it now. No one had any need for a stenographer (laughs) so I worked in one of these stores that sells everything from shoestrings to cakes. I worked in the bakery part. Then you had Creamy Man down there in the San Bernadino, Creamy Man. He called me up one day and said "I'd like to talk to you," so I went over and that quick I had a job. So I worked for him 'til 1912, November 1, 1912 when I got married. We went to Los Angeles and got married and I wanted to keep working but the children's father didn't want me to work so then we moved up to Santa Paula. He was a ....fireman at that time. He was having some difficulty with his back and the jolting of the car so the doctor told him to move, quit the job. san Bernadino was always known as the Santa Fe Town.

Dodson: I know it was quite a ?(riddle)? junction.

Culbertson:Yes,....because it has the round table and they do all the work there. That's where he worked and then he made runs to San Diego. Then we moved up to Santa Paula, and his brother put him to work in partnership on a citrus ranch, he never worked in citurs before. From then on we were citrus people. We lived there about four or five years. Then he got this job down near the mission in San Fernando, so we came there.

Dodson: What year was that then that you came to San Fernando?

Culbertson: That was 1915, July 5 it will be sixty-one years.

Dodson: You say the mission was in ruins at that time?

Culbertson: Oh yes, it was in terrible ruins and the one building that this picture shows was completely gone, it was not built as good as the mission had originally and the church was almost completely gone. I had the pleasure of , when they fixed the church back there, seeing them put the bell back on. I just happened to be there around that time. They used to have, well they still have an art shop there but you have to go through the school grounds to get into it, so I haven't done that yet. So they had everything in there and going through the mission was really something, oh it was wonderful. Then the packing houses, they had two of them--the orange house and the lemon house. We raised lemons mostly so we were connected with the lemon house. And, um, like I said, on the hills up above those dirt roads there were no houses, there was nothing but beautiful flowers and bushes and trees. It was just marvelous, just beautiful and oh my goodness why do people build up on mountains. They're taking them all up you know, and all the wildflowers are gone and of course we'd had so much drying weather during the last few years which was not so when I came here. The weather has changed completely.

Bumeister: Oh really.

Culbertson: Oh yes, even in the summertime it wasn't as hot as it gets here and in wintertime hardly any houses had fireplaces.

Dodson: Is that right?

Culbertson: No, it was just wonderful. I remember where we first stayed in the San Gabriel they had a wonderful great big pepper tree. I love pepper trees too. And of course they do a lot of dirt, you know, falling but they're so pretty, you know, when they're grown. Well, anyway when I came down to San fernando of course I got more acquainted through my work through the Valley and got to know quite a lot of people in the ways of life but my main pleasure was of course right here in San Fernando.

Dodson: You were married at that time then were you?

Culbertson: Oh yes, married, so um...

Dodson: What sort of social life did you have at that time?

Culbertson: Oh it was.....all the time but I worked and I .....the shows...most of what I did is..... A friend of mine called me about 8 or 10 years ago and she said "Selma, I think you should write down the things you're doing." And I just gave it to her verbatim over the telephone so everything isn't in it and since then I worked 35 years for this town for nothing. Because I've worked people all my life, I loved it. And I worked for the church in the war days. Before when we started the war there was a committee from all the clubs and churches and well chamber of commerce, you know, city council, and so forth. My church, I belonged to the Presbyterian Church at the time, the minister, Mr. Jones, sent me as appointee of the Presbyterian Church and at the meeting I was the one chosen to be the director of the ....Center and that's the job I really did love. Oh boy I loved it. (laughs) I was in there all four years of the war. I see some of my junior hostess' nowadays and we have the grandest chit-chats you know, because we remember all of the good days we had. And this YWCA party that's Saturday night is for the gal that she and I worked together to organize YWCA. And they had no place at first to meet so I called the Los Angeles office up and asked them if it would be possible that they could meet there in the morning. You know the service men did all their activities and were never there in the morning anyway, and they needed permission. The YWCA really started in the USO center and then they went in with the YMCA buliding which is an old house which ahs been down now across form the grammer school..... Now that hotel here is the Ray Hotel, the old Ray Hotel. That was the, elaborate place at first but it went down in the earthquake and the....exhibit was taken away. You see the horse and buggy, you hardly ever saw a car.

Dodson: That picture you have is 1911, I believe.

Culbertson: 19 when?

Dodson: 1911

Culbertson: 1911, and this is 1890 that's the difference.

Dodson: But I imagine none of those buildings are standing now, are they, besides the hotel.

Culbertson: This one is yes and it has several different business' in it now and of course we have beautiful streets now.

Dodson: What is the name of that buliding that is standing?

Culbertson: I don't know that it has a building, a name, I've never heard of it. I don't thin they name buildings that have houses in them (?). This being a hotel of course, the .....Hotel which was the best one in town built later, the

Flynn Family that was named the Fylnn Hotel, the....hotel. This one was named the Ray Hotel. This one was the drugstore, that was there quite awhile but it isn't there anymore. I couldn't tell you the name, this is part of the (?)mall(?) now.

Dodson: Oh I see.

Culbertson:

Dodson: Sometimes on these older buildings whoever put them up would give a name to it and you'd find the name on the front and that's why I asked I thought that was true here.

Culbertson: Well, now you see these do and this does, this was a hotel too.

Dodson: I notice the name McClay here did you know any of the McClay Family?

Culbertson: You will hear all about it that book. (?)

Dodson: Well, I wondered if you yourself knew any of the McClays?

Culbertson: Um, Oh yes, (giggles), oh Gran...I started to say something I shouldn't. Mr. McClay (laugh) he was a great character and

Dodson: Is this the senator, Senator Charles McClay?

Culbertson: Yes, (laughing), he was a great champ, you know, he never wanted anybody to drink and he bought the north side of the town above the tracks (laughs). You could do anything you wanted on the south side of the tracks, you know. So the saying always was well is it north of the tracks or south of the tracks. The train went straight halfway through the town and that was the trouble and he had his way, he really was the boss but he was a good man, a very good man.

Dodson: Some of his associates were the Porters, weren't they, did you know any of the Porters?

Culbertson: Yes, one, Mrs. Porter, course her husband is dead now, she still lives in the same place on, um, its one of the side streets, I think its McNeil. She was quite ill awhile back but I understand she's better, she was a very beautiful woman. He was an army man earlier, I don't know what his difficulty was. I was in a different....of society, I forget. This is something you might find interesting, these were some of the prominent men and of course this was the prominent woman.

Dodson: That prominent woman is Mrs. Culbertson, I take it.

Culbertson: It is.

Dodson: What are, who are the men in the picture?

Culbertson: Well, now, this was put up by the Chamber of Commerce to tell, to show people the promiment people who were doing things in the San Fernando and, uh, this is my picture right here, you can't see it very distinctly, it isn't there now, they took it down because whoever put it up had forgotten that they were facing west and it was fading the pictures but it didn't fade mine and I asked for it back but I never got it back so I'll have to forget it. But this was the first man chosen and it's Frank Maduno, he's one of my very best friends and this is Tom Dendy (?), he's past away. Now, this is Dave Caldren (?) he's the past mayor and a husband to that one girl I showed you on the picture. She was a Lopez (?). There's his wife right there, you see, she was Lopez. (Shuffling of papers) And the next one back here was my newspaper pal, we bothed worked for the newspapers, you know, and we used to have more fun telling each other the tales. His wife still lives here, he passed away and that was really a blow to me. But David became mayor when he was on the city coucil, of course, I always help the ones I think are going to be good. Then this is Walter .....(?), he has the ....., he's passed away now, but his son took over, ....., I knew him from the time he was about 12 years old, he was another one. These two were not at this time at all, he never was, that's .... Harper, he's an attorney here in town. This is Leo Flynn, he always was number one man, he was called Mr. San Fernando from the time we first had a city (?) meeting, the fella that was doing the introducing, he says now, I'll introduce Mr. and Mrs. San Fernando (laughs) oh you should have heard the screams. So but anyway we always worked together in Chamber of Commerce work, and community work and everything you find on that other paper. It's called the Citizen of the Month, this was me after I got the notice of it, there's Frank again, there's Leo, and that's a very dear friend, he's in Van Nuys now, Dick Conan (?), there's Dave again and anyway, he also is passed away. This was me after I had been almost killed by a burglar, not two months after, if I hadn't been so strong I wouldn't be here.

Dodson: It's a good thing you were strong then.

Culbertson: But, uh, he, um, now one thing I , um, deviating if I may, what appealed to me so much is that North Hollywood was not North Hollywood, Lankersheim, we always used to have to go that way into the city, you know, it was always Lankersheim, well I never could understand and I still don't why they still call it Lankersheim Blvd. when they changed the name to North Hollywood.

Dodson: I suppose it was because the Lankersheim's were so prominent in the history of the Valley.

Culbertson: Couldv'e been, couldv'e been but they could have changed the name of the street anyway it makes no differnece, I never go out that way.

Dodson: Is that right?

Culbertson: I don't drive very much and the eighth of next month I have to take my driver's license. This was during the war they had a fiesta once a year and originally it was in May, one thing I learned from that ...because the birthday of the King of Spain, if your the King of Spain, you used to own all of the property first, then he would give so much to the men and later on others who had money would buy portions of it, it was allocated around. But, uh, this was part of our first group of boys that came here. They were called the California's own 41st Field Artillery and some of the finest boys you ever heard of, as many people contradicted and said we never gonna have any fiesta during the war, and I said beg you pardon I have a picture that'll prove it. So this is the queen, the fiesta queen, see.

Dodson: Do you remember her name?

Culbertson: Pardon?

Dodson: Do you remember her name?

Culbertson: No, I don't. I have it somewhere but I didn't have time to go through all my stuff. Let's see if there's anything more in here. Oh this you'd be interested in, it's an old Penthouse too.

Dodson: Yes, I see. This looks very interesting.

Culbertson: ....outside, and everything is as it was originally.

Bumeister: Oh I've seen that, isn't that white with blue trim, or something like that.

Culbertson: Yes, some call it green-blue, I don't particularly care for it, but then...

Bumeister: I've seen that.

Culbertson: The San Fernando Elementary School, which used to be called the ....School in the days that we first came here and for a long, long times afterwards. ....finally is the board of education or whoever it was distributed milk to the children in the school didn't give any to the, that's the Mexican section of the town there, and there were 85% Mexican children (or gentlemen) to 15% white and some of them are very poor and they couldn't afford it and the children didn't have milk. So the teachers got together, and their the ones who started or restarted, talking about the earlier fiesta..., their the ones that restarted fiesta in 1928 for the reason of earning money to buy milk and food for the children in the school. But after the second yaer it got to be such a job for them that they turned it over to the chamber, well the chamber didn't take it the first year it was this group here , they called themselves committee

100 right up there, .....lot of old, old names on here of people who were here long ago, and there's the mission and uh, something interesting about that mission too is that the Pico House as I just mentioned is across the street from Brand.

Dodson: Yes, I know where that is.

Culbertson: Yeah, it a, the governor had his own business in there, and when you go in there, I have some very dear friends in there, the Historical Society meets there and take care of the place and you know its just grand, just fine. There's certain affairs they have, you know, that invite the public to come. But I belonged to it for awhile, then I got so heavyily involved that I just couldn't do everything but I keep up with them and they always send me there bulletins. Well now, he, there used to be water, they called it the water trough for the horses in front, and that's in front, it's in the park across the street from the mission now. And I never for the life of me, that was after we moved up to the big ranch, could figure out how they got that across that road, but they did, and it's in the park there right next to this one. This is.....holding a little Negro boy, Indian boy, in his hands. ....is very, very interesting to me and there wasn't any park there either when we came, just one statue but, um, there was a family named Hetingger (?), two elderly girls who had never married and their brother, their was prominent in the town but the girls never did much of anything but they had an idea of making a garden in that place, so if you go down there that's why that garden is there on account of those two girls. And then when the fountain was moved here you see it, why, it was right close, right in it. And they had benches there,you know, you could picnic there, oh, a lot of the organizations have their annual picnic in there, you have to get permission from Los Angeles to do it but you can do it, I used to do it. (laughs) But this paper is just about worn out, and just how look how many, many years old it is.

Dodson: Yes.

Culbertson: Your Porters are on here and the Waits (?), the Websters, and the Wolves (?) and almost any name you know of, these are the older ones down here, the honorary --Florence Dobson (?), Shauna ...(?), Lacretia.....(?), Ella Hetingger (?), she was one of those girls that fixed the park, er, had it done. Mrs. Louise Lopez....., Mr. and Mrs. John C. Wilson, Wilson was the one I told you, you know, that was post master for so long, Charles McLay, there he is in all his glory (laughing), and ....., and...,and..... the whole family here. And this is Mary Viagas (?), her daughter was my son's first school teacher. He .....because he would climb the pipe in the corner of the room, you know, the heating pipe, he'd never gone to kindergarten and he didn't know school discipline (?), but he was always full of fun, jolly, you know, singing and laughing, he climbed clear up to the top. The principal happened to be a very dear friend of mine, and, uh, Isabel called to her, and she says oh please come

in, John's up on top of the pole and I'm scared to say anything for fear he'll fall. So May (?) went in there and walked up real slowly towards him and looked up at him and said, Now John don't you think it's time for you come down and he slid right down the pole for her. (Laughs) You see Isabel showed that little fear in her, she was afraid, where May wasn't, would not show it. She was there for quite a long time. She and I both were on the planning commission for the city for awhile then I went on the parks and playgrounds. I want to tell you about the first fiesta. That's one thing I learned from...., who passed away. She told me that when they first all came here, you know, this group of Spanish people, they would have their fiesta's in May, and they would bring their friuts, and the flowers, and little animals and all to be blessed by the priest, everyone in the whole Valley, she said, would come. All the Spanish people and any other. And everyone would bring something towards the luncheon. They'd have the blessings first, them they'd have the luncheon (?), then after that they'd dance or I guess whichever they wanted to. And they, she said, for any excuse if somebody had a birthday or some prominent person was coming. They didn't need any excuse at all, they just had a fiesta. And dancers, oh boy, prettiest dancer I ever saw was a Spanish girl, she was one of the Mantia....(?) girls, oh she was gorgeous, I don't even know where she is now. Now this was the first court house in San Fernando. This is ....Dick (?), he was superior judge, he retired, about, oh almost a year ago now. We've always been very, very good friends, he's a wonderful chap and that was his partner when he was a attorney before he went up to the assembly, he went to the assembly first then Governor Warren sent him to the municipal court first then to the superior court, so he's quite a man, he did more for San Fernando then any of the men (?) I know of. He really did.

Dodson: Can you name some things he did?

Culbertson: Pardon?

Dodson: Could you name some of the things he did that you consider important?

Culbertson:Well, he worked on this, we were having trouble with the railroad going through, you see, the water place, you know, where the trains would stop for water was right there on Mclay. That meant that sometimes it would hold all the cars back on the other side. Well, I know, I myself have sat there for 25 minutes.....more than that, well, he worked on that. I wrote one of the letters to the commission up north what a terrible mess it was because at that time we didn't have a fire engine down south you see on....., south of Grand and we didn't have a police department down there, everything was up above the tracks, so..

Bumeister: (?) On the McLay side?.?. (?)

Culbertson: So they took the water trough away and put it up, oh,

several blocks up, away from there and then they made a ruling that they wouldn't stay there, any freight train wouldn't stay there any longer than five minutes, but they still do, because I sat there about ten minutes one day not long ago. (laughs)

Dodson: Well, Southern Pacific Railroad has been pretty powerful in California in getting what they want.

Culbertson: Oh it is, and those cars, you can count them by the hundreds, that's what I do, I sit and count them. (laughs) But once you get in a line you can't get out unless your in front. ..... did that and then he got this courthouse, oh he worked so hard on it. This is ..... Lewis, he's our city attorney and this is .... Miller.

Dodson: Can you tell us about some of the things here in the Valley that you consider particularly important, things that have happened since you've been here? What would you consider the most important thing that's happened?

Culbertson: I wouldn't dare say that I'd get spanked in town. (laughs) .....

Dodson: I see.

Culbertson:.....

Dodson: Can you remember anything about the depression that began in 1929, and how it affected you and affected the town?

Culbertson: Well, yes it was pretty bad, I think it was really worse than most people think, you had to be so very careful about how you lived, but I would say it wasn't as bad as today is.

Dodson: Oh you feel that things are worse today than they were then?

Culbertson: Oh yes, the crime and supreme court not allowing the death penalty to go through.....this is not political, the constitution says, let's see that phrase is, in human, oh what is it.

Dodson: No cruel and unusual punishment shall be inflicted.

Culbertson: That's it. I'd write to them and I'd tell them, now listen, that was two hundred years ago or practically two hundred years ago times were different them, there weren't so many people, there wasn't that type of crime, the type of crime that you're having today is horrible, you never heard, when I was a youngster I never heard of any kind of dope or anything. Now this fella that tried to kill me was a marijuana boy, and what he was after was money and if I hadn't been strong he'd have gotten me, I have a fracture sewed up over my ear.

Dodson: Is that right?

Culbertson: Yeah, and I lost hearing for, oh several months out of this ear and then I had to get a hearing aid there and then as you get older it affects the other ear, see I have one in each ear. It caused a problem for me.

Dodson: You feel then there is more crime now then when you first came here?

Culbertson: Oh absolutely, I'd be willing to say, oh at least 70, 80 percent more. When I first came out here, you wouldn't be afraid to go out alone at midnight. I used to love to go to theater, we don't have any theater for white people, there just ones for Mexicans now. I don't know why, but I try to stay out of things because I wouldn't go out alone at night anyways. I can't drive to other towns at night, but I am afraid since I had that bad deal. I never was afraid of anything, and I wasn't afraid of him, and I knew him and that's why he wanted to kill me,you see, because he knew that I'd tell.

Bumeister: You knew the person.

Culbertson: He skipped town right afterwards I heard and they never caught him. Every time I go down round in that area I look to see if I can find him, I think he used to work in a garage because he had one of those white gararge outfits on, no shoes, oh it was a nightmare. But I wasn't afraid at all, I had some very good help afterwards, I won't say it because he didn't want me to mention it, the two policemen that he got were just wonderful, oh they were so nice. One of them sat on my little grandmother rocking chair that I had by my bed and said don't try to get up just lie still and we talked. The kid found my purse but the joke was on him because I had only a dollar bill and little change but I had a secret pocket that had a twenty dollar bill in it. (Laughs)

Dodson: You feel the Valley has definitely gone downhill as far as crime is concerned, then?

Culbertson: Well, I think so. Now Brown, I didn't say anything about Governor Brown, but with him passing that marijuana is terrible. Other countries are planning to send in in ship loads. You can't, you can't hold a person down to one or two or three little things, you can't go in everybody's house and look and examine, that is also against the law. How are you going to get them? These little 8 and 10 year old boys that grab women's purses. Now today's paper told about a police woman that was attacked in a telephone booth, and she had her revolver in her purse and she took it out and shot him twice.

Bumeister: Eight year old?

Culbertson: Yes, she was 27 years old, she had police training,

she knew what to do but most people don't. (Laughs) One policemen was saying the other day, telling certain things that women should do to plan for if anything happens. He said women always can kick if they can't do anything else.

Dodson: We've talked about crime, what do you think about fashions? And the changes there.

Culbertson: The what?

Dodson: Fashions in clothes. Did you think they're much different than when you first came to the Valley?

Culbertson: What did you say? Clothes?

Dodson: Yes, fashion.

Culbertson: Oh fashions, I never paid attention to fashions, I haven't bought but one dress in seven years, and that's a cotton dress.

Dodson: I see. (Laughing)

Culbertson: I had a whole lot before hand because I used to go so much, and I had to have them. ....., I won't say it because it's naughty.....The bikinis the girls wear, just make me sick to my stomach, down to the beach, I think they're terrible. You know when I was ...(?) little (?) what we had to wear, stockings and tennis shoes and bloomers and (laughs) a blouse with long sleeves and a cap on our heads. Now I don't think you'd need to have all that on, but the second one, the one in between was the one that suited me, the full length swimming suit, it covered you all, but these bikinis, I think that's one of the worst things that ever anybody invented. (laughing)

Dodson: (laughing) I bet you don't like the mini-skirts either, do you?

Culbertson: No, I don't, and I won't wear 'em (laughing). My daughter laughs at me,....., because I won't follow the fashions a little better. I said why should I wouldn't be happy in them and so my dresses are all down here.You got a mini skirt on?

Bumeister: Oh no, (laughing), .....down to here.....up to here.

Dodson: (Laughs)

Culbertson: (Laughs), No, I don't see why they want to do such things.

Bumeister: It might please you to know that the dress lines are getting a little longer now. Have you noticed that?

Culbertson: Yes, I've noticed but you know now that.....to we elderly people, elderly women. You look at the papers and you say, oh such a beautiful dress, I'd love to have that, or a sweater, or whatever it is, I can't wear the shoes you people wear today either, but anyway you come down to the bottom, it's either 6 to 12 or 10 to 8 or something like that, and what are ya gonna do.

Bumeister: You mean the size?

Culbertson: (?) In size. (?) Uh-Huh. You can't wear them.

Bumeister: That depends where you buy.

Culbertson: Pardon.

Bumeister: That depends where you shop.

Culbertson: Yes, well that's what we need.

Bumeister: That's fine, that's fine.

Culbertson: Yup, that's what they need, shops where elderly people, elderly women, can get the sizes they want.

Dodson: Well, is this a change over the way it was before? Were elderly people in any trouble getting the size they wanted in the past, or this just something new?

Culbertson: No, never was, it's just something that's been since all this gruesome stuff has happened. I think that's really one of the causes of.....shinanigans, as they said in the old day, or used to say.

Bumeister: Off the reference, you should try Lane Bryant, have you ever been there, they cater to all different sizes.

Culbertson: Lane Bryant

Bumeister: A range of sizes from small to very large.

Culbertson: I've had it right here, all for about six months but I haven't been able to drive over, and I used to get a lot of things at Broadway too.

Side 2 of the tape

Dodson: To ask you whether there is anything in the history of the Valley that gave you some particular satisfaction or happiness since you've been here?

Culbertson: Yes, greatly, on the way to Van Nuys, there used to

be and Alfalfa field, that may sound silly to you, but oh it was beautiful, and on a hot day you know the cool breeze would come off that Alfalfa, I always hated when we got past it (laughing), it was wonderful. They used a lot of hay, you know, in the Valley, but that Alfalfa field was the one that appealed to me, and that was on Van nuys Boulevard, you'd never think of it now.

Dodson: I'm a little afraid it would've given me hay fever. But it didn't have that affect on you, huh?

Culbertson: (laughs) No, I'll tell you something really funny about hay fever. I went to a convention to Washington in '64. ...congressman was very fond of me. I went to the republican women. I've been on the states central committee, but this was a convention, there were four women in there that really I coulda spanked, ya know you do get mad at some people sometimes, it was at the time that in France, I believe it was, there were two American boys, you know, who had a taxi, and they took the taxi away and killed the man, and it was raising such an uproar here, and these four women, oh they just yelled, that I had.....the poor woman who was presiding, I felt so sorry for her she was the state president. So she stopped the conversation, then Jackson, who's a marvelous speaker and a very handsome man. He gave us a special meeting in the afternoon to clear that up, now he cleared it up perfectly for me but those women were still (?) yammering (?) when it was all over, oh it was terrible.

Dodson: Was there anything in the history of the Valley, since you've been here, that you especially disliked?

Culbertson: I never.....not liked him. My father just wanted me to be a dancer, he died quite young. So my mother had ballet lessons, I didn't like them, but I did it. You know, when you're raised in a foreign way, with foreign parents, you never think to say no I won't, no I won't, you never questioned anything, you never think about it.

Dodson: You're parents were born in Germany did you say?

Culbertson: Yes.

Dodson: Were you born in Germany too?

Culbertson: Yes, uh-huh, in the very town that where World War II ended and ..... stopped.

Dodson: I see.

Culbertson: And when the flyboys, they were the first ones to come back, they used to stop at the center there, and they always liked to sit and talk, you know, course I always talked to them cause I liked to too. Course they didn't know that I had relatives on both sides, you know, it was sad, in both World War I and World War II. He said you know when we got word up there

that the war with Germany is over, we opened every bit of amunition we had left right on on the city of .....And they certainly did, even my church was gone, where I was baptized. Oh I'm telling you, my tummy just felt cold and when I went over there in '62 I went on a tour with a bunch of women. When the was through in Glasgow, I went back to Germany and stayed in Frankfurt, I have relatives in Frankfurt too. When I took a taxi from the hotel and went to Darme..... and you would never know that anything had ever happened to it. They had some lovely stores in, well, it's North Hollywood now, where you could go and in Burbank. I haven't been to Burbank for quite awhile. But Panorama City, really is the ideal place to shop, if you can get there, I used to go all the time, but can't anymore.....

Dodson: Awhile ago, something about the fact that in the case of people born in Europe the children were very respectful to the parents. Do you think that that's not true among American's here in the Valley at the present time?

Culbertson: No, I sometimes I feel like taking a young (strap) and giving him a good paddling many a time. Now they'll bring there youngsters to visit you, you know, and they'll break right in the conversation, you can't visit with anybody, when there's some children, not all of 'em, there not all like that. I've had that happen to me lots of times.

Dodson: Well, you think children in general have less respect than they used to?

Culbertson: Oh yes, not all of them, but a good many, too many of them.

Dodosn: Would you say the general level of morality, in the Valley, is worse than when you first came here?

Culbertson: Oh don't mention it, it's worse than anytime I ever heard of.

Dodson: I see.

Culbertson:I had a very, very peaceful young life and I never saw anything like goes on today, all this, you can't touch a paper, all this sex business and shooting and when it comes to this marijuana, and this other stuff, I don't know anything about the others, I mean I don't try to remember about those, it's marijuana because that there... (marijuana boy)... and I think Mr. Brown is very wrong in saying that they could have two, what is it you call em, two something or other of the marijuana, it's wrong, now even.....he's a wonderful man, he does a wonderful job, but he's handicapped, just like you or I or anybody, would be handicapped when your governor passes a law like that.

Dodson: Isn't it true though that there was quite a bit of

bootlegging in the Valley during the prohibition era?

Culbertson: Well, that we didn't run into becuase we lived way out on the ranch (laughs) five miles out.

Dodson: I see.

Culbertson: Yeah. But I don't believe there was, I think there was more in the east, I wouldn't bootleg. (laughs)

Dodson: (laughing hard) I'm sure that we didn't suspect you of doing it.

Culbertson: (laughs) I .....wear a bikini.

Dodson: (laughing) Ms. Bumeister, do you care to comment on bikinis?

Bumeister: Um.

Dodson: Do you favor them or not?

Bumeister: It depends on the person wearing it. I feel it depends on the person wearing it.

Dodson: I see my assistant is rather non-commital on this particular subject, so we'll go back to you Mrs. Culbertson. (laughing)

Culbertson:.....

Dodson: We hear a great deal about minority rights and that sort of thing. Has there been any minority troubles in the Valley? You care to say anythingon that?

Culbertson: Well, yes, and yes there is, it's hard to say. When I was a youngster there was no such thing at all, and in school you had every nationality you could think of excepting, there never was a Mexican there, they are now I'm told. But I had the cutest Negro boy sit behind me in school and everybody, evne the teacher loved him. We used to have Valentine's Day, you know, exchange Valentines and all that, you don't, one of my best girlfriends was a Jewish girl, you never thought about it, you never thought about it at all. Oh one nice thing about that too is that each nationality preferred to live in an area where they were with those who came from the same area as they did. Like there'd be an area where the Germans lived, and remember my mother used to love to dance, she belonged to what they call a ....., a dance club. The Jewish people lived where they wanted to, the Italians did, the Negros did, they had Wabash and State St. We never thought anything about it, there never was any trouble. We worked.....playgrounds..... at the school were seperated for recess time. But after school we had a great big playground in the back and we all went in there. In the winter time they'd

freeze over one large path for us to ice skate. That was not one of my favorite sports. (laughs) And in summertime the boys used to have it for their ball games. Another thing unusual to believe is I used to like to climb the poles, they had rows and rows of poles to climb, uuuu, and I used to love that.

Dodson: Can you tell us something about the change in living conditions with the passage of time? That is, all the gadgets we have now that you didn't have. Was harder to keep house in the past than it is now?

Culbertson: I don't have 'em. (laughs)

Dodson: (laughing) Oh, you don't have all those gadgets. Well now, I notice you have electric lights instead of kerosene lamps.

Culbertson: Oh yes, we had gas lights, gas lights on the walls, there was no electricity when I was younger. And I remember the first electric, sign I saw (laughs), funny. You know .....the horse drawn street cars, I've always loved horses and of course they went quite slowly which always suited me, it would give me a chance to run up and pet them. The first light that I saw, I had walked down to, we lived two blocks from Michigan Ave.,you know, of course you've heard of Prairie Ave., well just a block away from the Lake Michigan (?) We were back at the second block. I always walked down, I just loved to walk down to the lake and you could walk up the great long, steep steps, you know, to get across the railroad tracks, you see, on the .....along there. I sit up there and my mother could never keep me in the house, when it rained or snowed or poured or anything, I was always out in the weather. Now I can't. Any difference in the denominational, .....like that, I never knew it. Chicago was a very small at that time too, you know.

Clicking and slurring.

Dodson:...the earthquake, what are your recollections of it, was your house damaged?

Culbertson: I was living upstairs in (laughs),I could climb stairs, in Number 10, and yes I do, and some of it was really funny. I knew of course, I was asleep cause it was early in the morning, 6:00 wasn't it. I usually get up at five but I hadn't gotten up that morning, I don't know why, I probably stayed up to see a picture in the evening. As soon as I felt the rocking, you know, I knew right away what it was, so I grabbed my robe and my slippers and went to the door and everybody around, there weren't all these same people, there were different people here, some of them were here, were at the door's. Up in this apartment where the manager lives now, oh there was the most charming man and wife, he had a lovely voice and he came there and he said, just as quitely and pleasantly, now don't be disturbed, we all know this is an earthquake, just stand in the jamb of your door and wait till it's over, it won't be too long, just as quitely, you

know, it was wonderful, I never will forget it, and he quited everything down excepting the one woman that lived in here, she was the manager and she moved away two days later, she wasn't about to have any more earthquakes.

Dodson: Was this building damaged?

Culbertson: Oh yes, especially me, I got the worst part of it. I can see now, since I've been in here which would be two years ago, two years in this last July, I had to move downstairs over there in Number 6 because the doctor didn't want me to climb stairs anymore, however I do occasionally when something's doing up there, I go up sideways and hold on to the bannisters, he doesn't know but he knows I'll be careful. When I was over there I had, have been having for some years now, what they call .....coma, (snaps) it comes just that quick and I fell out of bed. I had a terrific one about 25 years ago, that one, if I hadn't had a heart specialist there I wouldn't be here today.

Dodson: Is there something that you'd like to tell us that we haven't asked about, about the Valley and about your being here since you've lived here?

Culbertson: Well, what type, you mean action or sight (?)?

Dodson: Well, I would say something that made a great impression on you that you think ought to be recorded for all properity, prosterity rather?

Culbertson: Well, of course I prefer these two Spanish houses, I was telling you about, .....house, it means an awful lot to me. I like things of the old.

Ddoson: Is there one of the old Catholic churches here beside the mission?

Culbertson: Yes, it's down farther McClay.

Ddoson: I've been to the new one, there's an older one to?

Culbertson: Uh-huh, yes there is. They have an extra school for little children now too.

Dodson: How old is the older one, or do you know?

Culbertson: It isn't very old, the real old one that was here when I first came was taken down.

Dodson: Oh.

Culbertson: It was on the corner of McClay where the father's house is now. And next to it they had what they called St. Ferdinand's Hall, that's where that had parties and meeting and things like that, that's where we had our first two

.....banquets. And it was right directly across from ..... the Spanish cafe, and oh boy he was a wonderful cook, he catered it, hot as hot as can be. There were 69 women the first time there in the hall, we paid only $10 rent.

Slurring

Dodson: Do you have any questions you'd like to ask, something you'd like to bring up?

Bumeister: Not off hand I don't.

Dodson: You have been listening to an interview with Mrs. Selma Cuthbertson. The interview was conducted my Dr. James L. Dodson, curator of the Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum and Miss Katherine Burmeister, museum aide. The date is Thursday, March 25th, 1976.